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AF/E FOR MARIA BEYZEROV; DRL/IRF FOR ALICIA JUSKEWYCZ; DRL
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/22/2019

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SUBJECT: MAURITIUS AND THE "DEFAMATION OF RELIGION" ISSUE

REF: SECSTATE 128320

Classified By: CDA Barrie Walkley for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) After initially voting in favor of a resolution on defamations of religions, Mauritius -- thanks in part to U.S. initiatives -- has since 2008 changed its vote to an abstention. Post believes that it will be extremely difficult at this point to convince Mauritius to be more active on the issue -- partly due to the country's solidarity with the African bloc, but mostly due to domestic constraints in an election year. Mauritius is a multi-ethnic country where Hindus (48%), Christians (33%), and Muslims (17%) live side by side; however, under an atmosphere of apparent tolerance lies inter-community tensions. (NOTE: In Mauritius, ethnic groups are referred to as communities. END NOTE) The key to winning an election in this multi-ethnic environment is not to alienate any one particular community; as a result, the government is currently unlikely to adopt any positions that have religious overtones.

¶2. (C) COMMENT: The GOM may become more receptive to demarches on "Defamation of Religion" matters once the elections are over. (FYI: Elections could be held as early as March/April 2010.) Until that point, the best we can hope is to keep Mauritius in the abstention column on any defamations of religions proposals. END COMMENT

WALKLEY